

# Radiofrequency Rhizotomy (RF procedure)



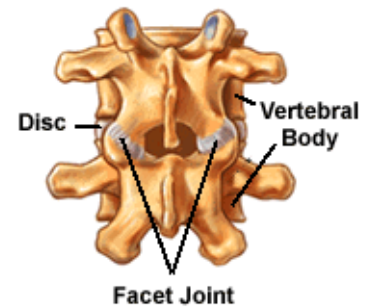
## Why use this treatment?

A radiofrequency rhizotomy is performed to provide longer lasting pain relief that is caused by injury or disease of the facet joints or nerves in your spine.

## How does a rhizotomy work?

This procedure temporarily “turns off” the nerve's ability to transmit pain signals from your spine to your brain. This is done by destroying a portion of the nerve with high frequency radio waves. These nerves do not control any muscles or sensation in your arms or legs. With these nerves “turned off”, you aren't able to feel as much pain that begins in your spinal nerves or joints. With time, the nerve will grow back but in the meantime, you'll most likely have pain relief. Pain relief ranges from 3 months to 2 years. Most patients have a significant reduction in pain for approximately 9 months after RF. If the pain does recur when the nerves grow back, the procedure can be repeated.

Posterior Spinal Segment



## How is the procedure done?

Very little preparation is required for a radiofrequency rhizotomy:

- No food for 4 hours before rhizotomy.
- In most cases, you can continue to take your usual medications before a rhizotomy. However, make sure you discuss what medications you use with your physician before the procedure.
- You must have someone to drive you home after the procedure

An IV is started so that a mild sedative can be used to keep you comfortable, but it is important that you are awake enough to answer the doctor's questions during the procedure. A local anesthetic will be used to numb the area where the injection is to be done. The exact placement of the needle electrode is guided by an x-ray machine. Once the needle is injected, a mild electrical current is used to stimulate the nerve and confirm its exact location. You may feel slight pressure or tingling during this part of the procedure. Then the electrode is heated to deaden the nerve that carries pain sensation back to your brain. When the procedure is finished, the needle is removed and the injection site is bandaged.

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### What are the risks with a radiofrequency rhizotomy?

This procedure is safe. However, with any procedure there are risks, side effects, and the possibility of complications. The most common side effect is increased pain - which is temporary. Other risks involve bleeding, infection, spinal block, epidural block, and injection into blood vessels. Fortunately, the serious side effects and complications are uncommon. While extremely rare, as with any invasive procedure, the risks of paralysis and death are possible.

### After your procedure

You will go home 30-60 minutes after the procedure. No driving for 24 hours. Your neck or back will usually be sore for several days after the procedure. This pain is usually caused by muscle spasms and irritability while the nerves are reacting to the procedure. Soreness is usually treated successfully using ice packs and over the counter medication or your usual pain meds. If necessary, the physician will give you medicine to treat the pain. Some patients say that their back or neck felt slightly weak for several weeks after their procedure. After a few days, you should begin to notice an improvement in your usual pain and can expect continued improvement over the next several weeks. Pain relief usually isn't experienced until about 2-3 weeks after the procedure when the nerve has completely died.

### Notify us if:

- There is a major change in pain level or if your pain pattern is different. Remember, your back or neck may be sore for 1-4 days after the injection; it will be at least 7 days before you notice significant pain relief and may take up to 14 days to feel the full effect.
- You develop chills or a fever over 101<sup>0</sup> F in the next 3 days.
- There is any abnormal bleeding or drainage from the injection site.
- Please call the office during business hours whenever possible.
- You can reach the answering service at (616) 776-9643 after the office is closed.
- Report to the nearest emergency room if you are unable to contact Javery Pain Institute.

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Patient Signature

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Date

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Clinical Witness

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Date